

[Cottonseed]

Alabama

[?] William P. Burke

COTTONSEED

"Morning, Tom; come on in and rest yourself. Here, take this rocker; them straight backed chairs are purty hard. You know, Tom, I shore found out some things yestiday yestiddy when I went to town. I had some cottonseed I aimed to trade for meal and hulls for my cows, and so I drove around to the oil mill to trade 'em.

"Well, when I got there the mill was running, with a whole passel of men a-working like the devil beating tanbark. They got a railroad sidetrack runs right up by the mill; and the sidetrack was full of freight cars plumb full of nothing but cottonseed. Some men in one of the cars was scooping the seed into a great big bin, using these pitchforks with a whole lot of teeth set close together to do the scooping with.

"While I was matching, sort of goggle-eyed, here come a fellow used to work for the old man Holmes. You remember him; a tall, lanky feller named Sam Burns.

"Here, fill up your pipe with some of this here homemade , Tom. I'll get you a coal out of the fireplace.

There hain't a match on the place; I told Mandy to get some matches from the peddler but she didn't. Said she didn't have enough eggs to get matches and.sugar both, and' Mandy [?] cain't drink coffee unlessen she has sugar in it.

"Oh, about Burns and the oil mill? I'll tell you jest as soon as you git your pipe fired up. Burns was weighing the cottonseed and talking all at the same time. Just as he give

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me the slip with the weight wrote on it, he said, ' [?] Do you use compound lard?, and I said 'yes, why?' He said, "Well, that is where this mill pays expenses." 2 "I was already interested in all that zipping machinery, and when he told me that I just couldn't hold out no longer. I asked him if he could let me look through the whole shebang. He said he thought so, and for me to wait a minute. I waited, and purty soon he come back, saying he'd go along and tell me about it.

"We started right there at the freight cars, where them car unloaders, as Burns called the cottonseed chunking men, were trying to fill up the big box. Down in the bostom bottom of that box they was a whopping big screw that kept the cottonseed going out in a steady stream. The thing worked just like a big sausage mill, only they weren't no grinding plates at the bottom end of the screw. It had [????] a clever contraption that Burns called a bucket elevator. It was a wide belt with a whole lot of buckets fastened to it with big frame bails. These bails would hold each bucket under the screw-end till it filled with cottonseed. Then the belt would move up till the next bucket was under the screw-end.

"This belt was carrying the buckets of seed upstairs so we went up to see what it did with 'em. Well, it was just dumping the seed into big bins in what Burns called the storage room. They got another belt up in the storage room that runs all the way across the room in what they call a tunnel. Two men were in there shoveling seed onto this belt, and the belt was carrying them away. The next time the seed stop they are in a cleaning machine. These cleaning machines take out all the dust and dirt. Then a conveyors yank conveyor yanks the seed to a gin and doggoned if they don't gin 'em all over again. They get lots of cotton off them seed with this linter gin; and they bale this linter cotton and sell it. That was the first time I ever knowed what 'linter cotton' is. And I'll tell you something right now: if John R. don't git rid of his old wore-out, snaggle-toothed gin I'm not 3 going [?] to let him keep on ginning my cotton and sending a third of the lint to the oil mill on the seed.

"Under the linter gin another one of them conveyors ketches the seed and throws 'em into the hopper of what they call the hull separator. This is a machine that bites the insides

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out of the seed and throws the hulls one way and the meats the other. More of them conveyors are there to ketch each one of them. We follered the meats first.

“That conveyor poured the meats into a big pot that Burns called a cooker. The feller that runs this pot is the cooker operator. He stays there and adds water as they need it while these meats are cooking. It takes about an hour to git 'em cooked done.

“They take the cooked cottonseed meat to a big hydraulic press, and that press mashes ever' bit of the oil out of the meat and leave the meat in hard cakes about as big as Mindys biscuit pan. I forgot to say that when the cooked meat is put in the press/ it is wropped up in a knid kind of cloth that Burns said they called camel's hair cloth. Fust I knowed of their making cloth out of camels' hair, too. When the cakes are took out of the press they skin this cloth off and put them in a breaker machine that breaks them up in little pieces. Why do they use the breaker machine? Why, Tom, them cakes are just about as hard as rocks after they are pressed.

“After the ckaes cakes are broke up another conveyor takes the pieces to a storage tank that set sets right by another tank full of bran. They mix this bran with the cake pieces and put it in a mill that grinds them into cottonseed meal. What kind of bran? Why, its just real fine-ground cottonseed hulls, that's all. 4 “The fresh cottonseed meal goes through another conveyor to a great big hopper over a automatic scale. That scale is one of the durnedest contraptions I ever seen. A man just sticks a cottonseed meal sack over the end of a chute and, wham! that scale shoots a hundred pounds of meal into the sack. All the feller has to do is sew the top of the sack with that heavy cord they [?] hold it tight [?] and the meal is ready to sell.

“What happens to the hulls? We went back to see about them. After they leave the hull separator their conveyor shoots them to the hull packer. There they are sacked and the sacks sewed, about the same as the meal is done. Sam said some of the oil mills have

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hull grinders to grind the hulls into the little pieces they call bran, but this mill ain't got one. They buy the bran that they mix with the cake to make the cottonseed meal.

"Here comes Mandy with some of them teacakes I been smelling all morning. Here, try some, Tom. I think if anybody can make good teacakes it's Mandy. Don't hurry, Tom, we'll have dinner after a while.

"The cottonseed oil? Now, Tom, you know I plumb forgot to see what happens to it before we can buy it back in lard buckets. I got to ask Sam about that next time I see him.

"You want to borrow my crosscut saw? Sure, it's out under the woodshed; just pick it up as you go by. Watch out for old Nellie and don't let her bite you. She's tied under the shed.

"Say, you-all goin' to the singing Sunday? Yeah, guess we'll be there.

"Well, come back when you can set longer, Tom. Bring the family over and make us a real visit."